

THE SPIRITUAL ISSUES OF THE WAR

This bulletin is published for readers at home and abroad by the Religions Division of the Ministry of Information, London, to elucidate the spiritual issues at stake in the war, and to provide information concerning the British Churches in wartime, as well as their contribution to post-war reconstruction.

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IMPORTANT INTERNATIONAL CHURCH CONTACTS IN LONDON

So many important œcumenical and international events took place in London last week that we cannot hope to do more than list them briefly.

(1) The Nikæan Club, which acts on behalf of the Church of England Council on Foreign Relations, organized a reception which H. M. King Haakon of Norway graciously attended. The Archbishop of Canterbury and Mrs. Fisher were present. The Archbishop paid a moving tribute to the resistance of the Norwegians and in particular to the resistance of the Norwegian Church.

(2) At the spring meeting of the British Council of Churches distinguished visitors from the Continent were present and addressed the assembly. These included Dr. W. A. Visser 'tHooft, Bishop Fjellbu, Dr. Marc Boegner, Dr. Kœchlin (President of the Swiss Reformed Churches), and Professor Alivisatos of Greece.

(3) At the reception mentioned above the Archbishop of Canterbury referred to a letter which he had received from the President of the Synodal Commission of the Dutch Reformed Church on food conditions in Holland. He expressed his grave concern at the information therein conveyed and said that he was sure his concern was shared by the whole British people and by the British Government.

(4) The Archbishop of York, on his return from his visit to Italy, Greece and Malta, spoke on his experiences. He paid a tribute to the personality and work of Regent Archbishop Damaskinos. The text of greetings interchanged between the Regent

Archbishop and the English Archbishops will be printed in the Ministry's Orthodox Church Bulletin.

(5) The Archbishop of York delivered the Burge Lecture at the Mansion House on The Christian Churches and International Peace. The Lecture has been published by the Student Christian Movement Press, Bloomsbury Street, W.C.I., price one shilling. It is an important and authoritative contribution to the discussion of vital post-war issues.

THE "NEW WORLD" IN EUROPE

We are indebted to the American paper "Current Religious Thought" for this story of the present Protestant Church situation on the continent of Europe. The article was presented as a report at the annual meeting of the National Lutheran Council in New York by the Rev. A. L. Warnshuis, D.D. Dr. Warnshuis spent seven weeks of November and December in Europe, travelling in Great Britain, France and Switzerland and conferring with men who, first-hand, knew conditions in the Scandinavian and Baltic countries and in Finland. Data on Church affairs in Germany are, of course, still largely in eclipse. The trip was made by Dr. Warnshuis in his capacity as foreign counsellor of the Church Committee on Overseas Relief and Reconstruction and also with special commissions from other religious organizations. The article follows:—

I have been with people who have been living in a world governed by demonic powers—no law, no justice, no security was left for any man. They lived in a completely

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arbitrary world. Moreover, in that world of terror, their basic beliefs and principles were attacked. You need not spend any time in telling European people of the evils of a deified nation-state. I fear it is impossible to make real to you the experience they have endured.

I have been with people who have been active in the Resistance (spelled with a capital R). For years they lived in an illegal, unmoral world. Perhaps they began by hiding a few Jewish children; then they lied to cover that secret. Then they falsified papers and documents to protect themselves. As they said, once you begin to do illegal things, you must go farther and farther into illegalities to cover up what you have previously done. Resistance in a totally arbitrary world justifies any means to which you may resort to accomplish your purpose. You lie, you steal, you shoot, whenever necessary, out of loyalty to the basic principles of justice and freedom. These people, burning with indignation at conquest and oppression, most deeply dissatisfied with pre-war conditions, have now no desire to be paid off in the small change of political manoeuvring. When some of their leaders now accept office in the government, their former fellows think of them as having gone over to the old men and as traitors to Resistance. . . . They have burning convictions for which they have risked their lives, having shared a selfless comradeship, they are in earnest in making a new approach to government. There is often ruthless revenge on those who have collaborated with the enemy. There is rebellion against any mere return to the past. For a while, life in the liberated countries may be riskier than it was even under the Nazi regime. There will certainly be strain and tension and strife and that must not surprise or discourage us. There is hope in the groups that with patience and tenacity are striving to re-establish order while reconstructing their economic and political life. The agony of mind and soul of many involved in the Resistance cannot be imagined. It is often ten times worse than the physical suffering endured. To them our discussions seem meaningless, our philosophizing irrelevant and purposeless. The problem of reconciling Christian morality with their urgent duty as members of the liberation movement is almost insoluble and to either abandon morality or fail in duty is equally impossible.

What of the Churches in Europe? I bring back not any sob story appealing for your pity. The Churches are full of joy and cour-

age and hope for they have been awakened to renewed life and to active service. I was told that we have never had in America such keen, alert, aggressive "social gospelers" as are now in the Lutheran Churches of Denmark and Norway. Before the war, these Churches for the most part were on the periphery of life. They were an appendix to what was happening in political and national life. The clergy were concerned with the inner religious life of the people and with their heavenly destiny. One of the leaders of the Church in Holland, distressed by the conservatism, the party quarrels and the impotence of the Church, said in 1939: "We fear a catastrophe may be the last means in God's hands to bring about the reformation that is needed." Those were prophetic words that are being fulfilled.

The Churches Spoke

The Churches became the voice of the free spirit of the people. The pulpit and the sermon were the only uncensored forum of the people. The Churches discovered that they have a message to proclaim to State and nation. They became the conscience of the nation and frankly outspoken in condemnation of wrong. For a long time the Churches had not been that and their silence was one of the causes for the present disorder. This change has not happened all at once. At first, the voice was somewhat hesitating. But gradually, not always consistently, but with increasing boldness the Churches spoke. They protested against the treatment of the Jews, against forced deportation, against educational policies and programmes, against sterilization practices and finally against Nazi principle and philosophy and the forceful imposition of them upon the people. The Churches took upon themselves to be the opposition to those who wanted to destroy the basis of life. To understand this, we must remember that their public statements were made at a time when only one opinion was tolerated in public life and when there was room for only one conception of life and that every word that did not conform had the effect of a bomb. In a totalitarian regime, the Churches, in spite of all the risks, were the only homes of spiritual liberty and the only defenders of the persecuted and the oppressed.

No Neutrality in Totalitarianism

The Church was not directly attacked. On its own will it took the offensive. In Germany, the Nazi regime endeavoured to in-

corporate the Church in its system and make it a docile instrument of National Socialist propaganda and education. There the Confessional Church had to defend itself. In the occupied countries, the indirect method was adopted and the Church was ignored or removed as far as possible from the affairs of the world. By paying the price of accepting a passive role, the Church might have brought a long period of quiet. It withstood that temptation and when it became plain that the laws of God were being systematically broken in the life of the State and the people, the Church opened the attack. In a totalitarian situation, the Church cannot keep out of the fight. There can be no neutrality. The Church must make up its mind as to where it stands and it must translate principles into action. In Holland we now read in the controlled Press the complaints of the regime against the persecution of itself at the hands of the Church which has stirred up public opinion in opposition to National Socialism.

So the Churches with an awakened consciousness of responsibility for the community and the nation have become the centre of life. Constructive forces are grouping themselves around these protesting Churches. The evangelistic opportunity of the Churches is exceedingly great. Church attendance in Holland has doubled.

The Religious Background of Resistance

This is not a mere emotional revival that will not last long. Neither is it the result of a mere process in which the Church has been shaken by outside forces. The Church is not made by its environment. The Church grows truly and strongly by the development of its own inner life. This awakening is characterized by a renewed interest in the Bible, not merely a theology of biblical realism, but the standard of everyday living. This courageous testimony of the Churches springs from their discovery that Christ reigns, not that He will reign. He reigns now. He is to-day the King of Kings. History is in the hands of the invisible Lord. Hitler does not know it. The world does not know it. The Church knows that there is One who is stronger than the fuhrer. This is no longer a hypothetical possibility nor a millennial hope but a basic certainty. The struggle of the Church with the occupying powers appears to be one that has the characteristic features of a conflict between two powers which by their very nature are unable to come to an understanding. Outwardly it seems a very human struggle.

But something else appears—a "Third" enters the contest. The true and real significance of what is happening is what God says through, sometimes in spite of, the Churches. This is the rediscovery of the Church as the body of Christ in the midst of a hostile or indifferent environment. The realization of this fact made it possible and indeed inevitable that the Church should speak out and become the leader in protesting against the evil that it saw in the State. It did this, not in general terms, but in specific manner in concrete issues. This made the Church the backbone of the Resistance. The Church has had a sense of superiority because it possessed knowledge of a secret, the universal Lordship of Christ. This knowledge has given the Church a courage that will accept no compromise nor any separation of religion and politics, or any divorce between the spiritual life and our material society.

Now—what do they expect of us?

Do you think for a moment that they can understand how we can remain in any way aloof from this struggle? They could not do so even when home and family and possessions and life itself were endangered by engaging in the fight. They ask most earnestly—first, sympathetic understanding of their struggle to maintain God's laws in opposition to the demonic forces that oppressed them and then they pray earnestly that the American Churches may with equal courage and faithfulness observe and obey the teachings and commandments of God and with boldness testify to them in relation to all national and international affairs. In a word, they hope we may have the courage to get into the arena and to fight.

BRITISH BAPTISTS' WELCOME TO FELLOW-CHURCHMEN FROM CANADA AND THE U.S.A.

We recently printed an account of Congregational enterprise in the matter of contact with American chaplains. This week we tell the story of Baptist effort in the same field.

The Baptist Commonwealth and Colonial Society began its work among overseas Baptist chaplains early in 1940, when Canadian troops first began to arrive in the homeland. Opportunities of fellowship were provided, preaching engagements were arranged, and literature was distributed among overseas troops. This first phase of the Society's work was referred to by Major (now Lt.-Col.) J. Gordon Jones of the Canadian Army in the following terms:

To the Baptist Colonial Society and its Secretary, Rev. F. C. Morton, I am very much indebted. For many years I have known of the worth-while work this Society has been doing in Western Canada and other places, but it was not until my arrival in England with the Canadian Army Overseas that I became familiar through actual experience with the Society's activities. Mr. Morton has proved himself to be a true friend, always thoughtful and considerate about the welfare of our Canadian troops. There are many ways in which the Society and its Secretary have helped us—hospitality has been provided for those on leave, soldiers' comforts have been sent to those in barracks, and, above all, a spirit of sympathy and goodwill has been shown us on every possible occasion. Just a few days ago, for example, two large bundles of books—devotional, inspirational and sermonic—were received for the use of our chaplains. Such generous actions are the cords which bind our churches together into one great world Baptist fellowship.

(Signed) J. GORDON JONES.

Then in the summer of 1941 the first of a series of monthly luncheons was given at the Baptist Church House by permission of the Rev. M. E. Aubrey, C. H., M. A., General Secretary of the Baptist Union of Great Britain. These luncheons were continued throughout the winter and afforded chaplains fellowship with one another, and also gave them an opportunity of meeting British Baptists and of hearing representative Baptist leaders.

Overseas Fraternal

In 1942 it was decided to found the Overseas Baptist Chaplains' Fraternal.

Dr. J. H. Rushbrooke, M.A., President of the Baptist World Alliance, and also of the Commonwealth and Colonial Society, is the President, the Rev. F. C. Morton is the Secretary, and Mr. H. C. Janes, of Luton, is the host. The present membership is seventy, but over two hundred overseas chaplains, including many Americans, have been associated with the Fraternal since its inception. Chaplains of other denominations have been welcomed to the meetings. There is a short business session at the meetings followed by discussion and an address by a representative British leader, then tea and a social hour.

This Fraternal, founded by the Society in 1942, has had another successful year. There are now over 130 overseas ministers (including Americans) in its membership. Meetings are held monthly at the Church House, and the Fraternal is proving a valuable help in preserving and deepening the sense of fraternal unity among our visitors and British Baptists. In addition to the regular monthly meetings, an all-day Conference was held in London; a joint meeting was held with the Baptist Board; and members of the Fraternal attended one of the quarterly meetings of the London Baptist Association at which four of their number spoke on the subject: "Baptists across the Atlantic." If the military situation permits, it is proposed to hold a three-day retreat for the chaplains in the summer.